

WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A method of transmitting packets, the method comprising:
 - using a switch to receive a stream of data units including a payload portion and an attribute portion;
 - using a switch to duplicate at least the payload portion of a data unit within the stream of data units; and
 - using a switch to enable access to the duplicated payload portion of the data unit by two or more terminals.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein the data unit includes an Internet Protocol packet.
3. The method of claim 2 wherein the attribute portion of the data unit includes an Internet Protocol header.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein the attribute portion of the data unit specifies one or more pieces of layer three information.
5. The method of claim 1 further comprising using the switch to generate and associate different attribute portions with duplicates of the payload portion generated by the switch.
6. The method of claim 1 wherein using the switch to duplicate at least the payload portion includes duplicating only the payload portion of the data unit.
7. The method of claim 5 wherein using the switch to associate different attribute portions with the data unit and duplicates of the payload portion includes specifying destination information that differs among the duplicates of the payload portion.
8. The method of claim 1 wherein using the switch to duplicate includes using the switch to duplicate the payload portion and the attribute portion.

9. The method of claim 5 wherein using the switch to generate and associate different attribute portions includes changing an IP destination address.

10. The method of claim 9 wherein changing the IP destination address includes changing the IP destination address to an IP address corresponding to one or more terminals to which access to the payload portion will be enabled.

11. The method of claim 1 wherein using the data unit includes audio content.

12. The method of claim 1 wherein the data unit includes video content.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein the data unit includes streamed media.

14. The method of claim 1 further comprising receiving a request to receive the stream of data units from at least a requesting one of the two or more terminals.

15. The method of claim 14 wherein using the switch to enable access to the payload portions of the data units includes enabling access to the at least one requesting terminal in response to the request.

16. The method of claim 14 wherein the request is received from a device other than the terminals.

17. A switch comprising:

a first communications interface that is structured and arranged to receive a stream of one or more data units that each include a payload portion and an attribute portion;

a buffer structured and arranged to store at least the payload portions of the data units included in the received stream;

a replicator structured and arranged to duplicate at least the payload portions of one or more of the data units; and

a second communications interface structured and arranged to enable access by two or more terminals to the payload portions that are duplicated by the replicator.

18. The switch of claim 17 wherein a data unit includes an Internet Protocol packet.

19. The switch of claim 17 wherein the attribute portion of a data unit specifies one or more pieces of layer three information.

20. The switch of claim 17 further comprising a processor structured and arranged to generate and associate different attribute portions with the payload portions that are duplicated by the replicator.

21. The switch of claim 20 wherein the processor is structured and arranged to specify destination information that differs among different duplicated versions of a payload portion.

22. The switch of claim 20 wherein the processor is structured and arranged to change an IP destination address.

23. The switch of claim 22 wherein the processor is structured and arranged to change the IP destination address to an IP address corresponding to the terminal to which access to the payload portion will be enabled using the second communications interface.

24. The switch of claim 17 wherein the replicator is structured and arranged to duplicate the payload portion and the attribute portion.

25. The switch of claim 17 wherein the data unit includes audio content.

26. The switch of claim 17 wherein the data unit includes video content.

27. The switch of claim 17 wherein the data unit includes streamed media.

28. The switch of claim 17 further comprising a third communications interface structured and arranged to receive a request to receive the stream of data units from at least a requesting one of the two or more terminals.

29. The switch of claim 28 wherein the second communications interface is structured and arranged to enable access by the at least one requesting terminal to the payload portions in response to the request.

30. The switch of claim 28 wherein the requestor includes a device other than the terminals.

31. The switch of claim 17 wherein the second communications interface transmits the duplicated stream of data units to two different terminals.

32. The switch of claim 31 wherein the two different terminals receive the stream of data units at two different temporal offsets.

33. The switch of claim 17 wherein the replicator includes more than one pointer to contents of the buffer to enable a first terminal to receive the stream of data units at a different point in the stream of data units than a second terminal.

34. The switch of claim 17 wherein the buffer includes more than one instance of the stream of data units.

35. The switch of claim 17 wherein the replicator is structured and arranged to duplicate only the payload portion of the data unit.

36. A method of receiving a duplicated stream of data units, the method including: interfacing with a network including a switch capable of duplicating the stream of data units and making the duplicated stream of data units accessible to more than one terminal; and

receiving the stream of data units from the switch, wherein the data units within the stream each include a payload portion that has been duplicated by the switch and an attribute portion.

37. The method of claim 36 further comprising generating perceivable output based on the stream of data units.

38. The method of claim 36 wherein the attribute portion of the data unit includes an IP header.

39. The method of claim 36 wherein the attribute portion of the data unit specifies one or more pieces of layer three information.

40. The method of claim 36 wherein the data unit includes audio content.

41. The method of claim 36 wherein the data unit includes video content.

42. The method of claim 36 wherein the data unit includes streamed media.

43. The method of claim 36 further comprising generating a request to receive the stream of data units.

44. The method of claim 43 wherein the payload portions of the data units are received in response to the request.

45. A method of distributing data units to terminals, the method comprising:
interfacing with a network including one or more switches capable of duplicating at least a payload portion of a data unit within a stream of data units including an attribute portion and the payload portion; and

transmitting the stream of data units to the switches for duplication of at least the payload portion of the data unit within the stream for transmission to two or more terminals.

46. The method of claim 45 wherein the data unit includes audio content.

47. The method of claim 45 wherein the data unit includes video content.

48. The method of claim 45 wherein the data unit includes streamed media.

49. The method of claim 45 wherein the attribute portion of the data unit includes an IP header.

50. The method of claim 45 wherein the attribute portion of the data unit specifies one or more pieces of layer three information.

51. A switch comprising:
first communications interface means for receiving a stream of one or more data units including a payload portion and an attribute portion;
buffer means for storing at least the payload portion of the data units included in the received streams;
replicator means for duplicating at least the payload portion of one or more of the data units; and
second communications interface means for enabling access by two or more terminals to the payload portions that are duplicated by the replicator.

52. A system comprising:
a source system structured and arranged to enable access to a stream of data units;
a switch structured and arranged to receive a stream of data units from a source system, to duplicate at least a payload portion of the data units in the stream, and to transmit payload portions duplicated to two or more terminals; and
one or more terminals structured and arranged to receive a stream of data units that have been duplicated by the switch.